

For years, I joined many of my colleagues, led by Mr. HOEKSTRA, in seeking to establish performance measures to ensure that these national service programs are in fact meeting their goals.

Under the Bush administration, it has become clear that these programs are being held more accountable and they have become more efficient as a result. For example, the corporation received its seventh consecutive clean audit during the fiscal year 2006. Likewise, the corporation's leadership has instituted significant improvements in efficiency and quality, including streamlining the grants and application reporting processes, consolidating five field service centers into one, and automating education award payments, time and attendance, and travel.

In short, the recent management of this program has far surpassed its record of low accountability under the previous administration; and for that reason in particular, it deserves our continued support.

Moreover, this program brings together our neighbors to serve one another and thus benefit our Nation. Although there are clear opportunities to strengthen and improve these programs, the simple fact is that the corporation plays a key and increasingly effective role in, as President Bush would say, "rallying the armies of compassion."

Later today I plan to offer an amendment that will strengthen this already good bill. The purpose of my amendment is to acknowledge the patriotism, commitment, and sacrifice made by members of the military and their families. In return for their service to our Nation, I believe the least we can do is ensure our national service programs are able to benefit veterans and military families.

Madam Chairman, this bill is based on sound principles for reform outlined by the administration and developed in conjunction with the corporation. It includes a long overdue emphasis on accountability with its inclusion of performance measures and increased competition. And on the whole, I find the bill to be a balanced one that is worthy of our support.

Madam Chairman, this bill represents a bipartisan effort to come together on a program that is good for the citizens of this Nation.

Unfortunately, our Democrat colleagues have been unwilling to work in the same bipartisan fashion on our Nation's security interests. It has been 18 days since the Protect America Act expired, nearly 3 weeks that the majority has conspicuously refused to bring the bipartisan Senate Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act modernization bill to a vote. And yesterday we got a glimpse of the reason why. An anonymous Member argued that delaying action on this critical security measure made for good politics. Madam Chairman, it is unfathomable that our Nation's secu-

rity may be put at risk in the name of political gamesmanship. I strongly urge the majority to bring FISA modernization for a vote.

Madam Chairman, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PLATTS), and I ask unanimous consent that he be allowed to control that time.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Pennsylvania will control the time.

Mr. PLATTS. I reserve my time.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This is a great day for national service. It has been 15 years since we reauthorized our national service laws. As chairwoman of the Healthy Families and Communities Subcommittee, I am pleased to speak in support of H.R. 2857, the Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education Act, the GIVE Act.

I am also pleased to say that the administration and the service community support the GIVE Act. I would like to thank Chairman MILLER for his continued strong support and work on this reauthorization. I would also like to extend my thanks to the ranking member of our committee, Mr. MCKEON, for his hard work.

Finally, I would like to thank my good friend and ranking member of the subcommittee, Mr. PLATTS, for his work on this reauthorization.

Later I will speak on my manager's amendment, which is also a bipartisan effort. National service has a distinguished and strong history in our Nation. The benefits of service cannot be disputed. Evidence shows that service and volunteering lowers school dropout and crime rates, lowers costs associated with the aging population, and improves health among the elderly.

Volunteering is a cost-effective way of working to solve the challenges facing our Nation today. That is why the passage of the GIVE Act is necessary. One of the most effective volunteer organizations in this Nation is AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps volunteers offer a range of services focused on low-income and disadvantaged communities. Our legislation recognizes their invaluable work and increases the number of participants to 100,000.

The GIVE Act also encourages programs to recruit underrepresented populations to serve, including scientists and engineers, young people in our aging-out foster care, children at risk of delinquency, and other disadvantaged young people.

I truly believe that expanding national service, particularly to disadvantaged youth, is an effective way to combat things like youth gangs and violence, and the evidence bears it out.

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If we are serious about reducing gang violence, we must take the first step and offer children an alternative.

This legislation creates a Summer of Service program which gives middle

school and high school students an opportunity to become engaged in a positive way within their community. Through the Summer of Service program, our Nation's young people will have a chance to serve with others their own age while improving their community.

Research shows that if students are engaged in service at an early age, they continue to serve throughout their life.

We are strengthening the mission of the first responder volunteer program, the National Civil Community Corps by requiring more intense disaster and emergency relief training during down periods in order to be better prepared in a time of crisis.

We are all aware of what our Nation faced in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, and the NCCC was there to respond, and continues to recover today.

The GIVE Act will help our Nation become better prepared for future disasters by training and preparing more emergency volunteers. The GIVE Act creates in the corporation an office of outreach and recruitment. The new office will establish a reserve corps made up of those who have gone through the program and are alumni. The reserve corps alumni will be called on during emergencies, disasters, or other times of national need.

We've heard people asking over and over again during our hearings, why aren't we using former volunteers? The new outreach office will work to connect over 500,000 former volunteers who can be resources for recruitment.

The GIVE Act lowers the age of participation in the National Senior Service to 55 years old. By lowering the age, we are encouraging retiring Americans to participate in national service and giving older Americans the opportunity to lead us into the future. Our Nation's retiring and retired adults are a rich resource that cannot be overlooked.

Every American, old and young, has skills that improve the day-to-day functions of our society. The GIVE Act encourages individuals to get involved, creates a deeper commitment to service, and makes our Nation more like what it should be.

I want to again thank Chairman MILLER for his deep commitment to national service, Ranking Member MCKEON and Congressman PLATTS for their work with us on this bipartisan activity. And I urge my colleagues to support this much needed legislation.

Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PLATTS. Madam Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today, and I certainly rise also in support of H.R. 2857, the Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education Act. This program will certainly strengthen and finally reauthorize the Nation's national and community service programs. And after 15 years, this reauthorization is certainly long overdue.

I want to add my words of praise and thanks to my Chair, Chairwoman